

## AMENDMENT TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please amend the specification by replacing paragraphs 0003, 0004, 0012, 0013, and 0022 with the following amended versions:

**[0003]** It has been realized that this type of binding had two major drawbacks. During the practice of the conventional alternate step technique, it was has been noticed that these systems necessitated a forward rotational movement of the boot in relation to the ski which was is located far ahead of the foot. The result was is a movement of the foot that was not natural, far from the foot rolling movement that can be observed when walking. During the practice of the skating step, these systems also had have the drawback of providing only a very poor lateral guidance of the boot in relation to the ski.

**[0004]** In order to remedy these problems, systems for binding the boot to the ski, whereby the boot was is articulated on the ski about an axis arranged immediately behind the front end of the sole, were introduced in the 1980s. These systems had have at least part of the binding device arranged under the boot sole. This enabled enables the boot pivot point to be moved back in relation to the ski and to rigidify the torsional strength of the boot/binding assembly during the practice of the skating step.

**[0012]** The binding device 12 is, for example, similar to that described in the document FR-2.739.788 and family member US-6,017,050, which will be referred to for a detailed description. This device includes, in the illustrated embodiment, a connection mechanism, in the form of a front jaw 16 in which a front bar 18 of the boot 14 is adapted to be locked to enable the attachment of the boot to the ski by means of articulation about the transverse axis of the bar.

For this purpose, this binding device 12 enables the boot heel to be lifted from the ski. The device 12 also includes longitudinally, at the rear of the jaw 16, an elastic return mechanism that includes an articulated connecting rod 20 adapted, for example, to hook a rear bar (not shown) arranged under the sole 22 of the boot 14. Finally, in the rear extension of the connecting rod, the binding device 12 also includes an upwardly projecting guiding edge 24, or rib, the profile of which is complementary to a corresponding downwardly facing groove (shown in cross section in FIG. 2) formed in the boot sole.

**[0013]** According to the invention, the arrangement of the binding device 12 on the ski 10 is such that, it is arranged transversely on both sides of the position of the binding device 12, when mounted on the ski, of the portions of the upper surface 26 of the ski that form longitudinally extending support surfaces 28 which corresponding support surfaces 30 of the boot sole are adapted to contact directly.

**[0022]** The binding device 12 shown in the drawings is a simple embodiment, and the invention can be implemented with other types of binding devices adapted for the practice of cross-country skiing. The invention also encompasses the binding device being partly integrated into the ski, for example with an element that is articulated directly in the ski, or with part of the guiding edge, or rib, integrated into the ski. However, the invention provides that, at least in the area of the support zone, the binding device is narrower than the ski. These support zones are preferably longitudinally arranged in an area corresponding to the metatarsophalangeal bending zone of the user's foot, which is the preferred zone through which the user exerts his support force at the end of the thrust, when his heel is already raised with respect to the ski.